THE

AERONAUT.

No. 71. July 24. 1817.

Est miserorum.

PLAUTUS.

'Tis misery's boon.

Never were any two men, perhaps, exactly alike. Resemblance never was carried by Nature to such an extent, and to so much accuracy, as to present any separate individuals, similar, not merely in the conformation of their bodies, and

the expression of their features, but in the nature of their dispositions, and the qualities of their minds. Variety seems to distinguish every separate object of sense and perception;- one being differs from another, in like manner, as the surface of the globe we inhabit, is alternately adorned, by mountains towering to heaven, and oceans boundless in extent, plains of illimitable length, and valleys of eternal verdure.

But this wonderful diversity of human passions and affections, attachments and desires, is indispensable, because essential to the existence of men gathered together in social compact, and with common interests. Each labors in his own vocation, in the pursuits of wealth, and the gratifications of ambition; while aversion in one is counterbalanced by

fondness in another. The wants of all are thus supplied, prejudices counteracted, and deficiencies abridged. While our fellows satisfy us with what we cannot create for ourselves, we, in our turn, contribute to the common stock of human happiness, and add to the accumulated sources of human enjoyment.

In all, however, notwithstanding this remarkable difference, we may perceive certain points of coincidence, chiefly shewn in similar circumstances. All are sorry for unexpected losses, and all rejoice in sudden successes; while afflictions of body, or the blessings of health, distresses of mind, or pleasurable anticipations, elevate and depress, gratify and torment.

the vicissitudes of fate, the miseries of disease, the stings of misfortune, and the pains of poverty, cast a shade over the prospects of life, as the experience of a contrary state, enlivens, chears, animates, and invigorates the moral and intellectual powers. All have nearly the same sensations of fear and hope; and the disappointment of long cherished expectations, the destruction of the fairest plans, and the reverse of the happiest condition, produce upon almost all, the same languor, listlessness, inactivity, & despair. It is natural to us to dread danger & to fly to safety, to avoid the tumults of contention, and hasten to the bowers of repose.

In taking a view of the

darker side of human life, we may, by examination, find the same effects produced by the same causes. ~~As a subject then for~~ In our present paper, we shall consider the nature and causes of that thing called Melancholy, of which all complain, but which none can prevent.

We shall begin by asking the question, Is Melancholy confined to any particular condition, or does it visit the children of mortality at any particular seasons? Now we need not go far, to answer the interrogatory. Each of us, individually, can attest to its frequent entrance into the human heart, and apparently, without any reason. It comes and flits, like a shadow over the soul, gives no warning of its approach,

and leaves no mark of its existence. It darkens the features of beauty,

— o'er the changing aspect flits
And clouds the brow, or fills the eye;

and then is seen no more. Like the clouds that obscure the noon-day heavens, it lingers awhile upon the countenance, hides its lustre in gloom and shadow, and proclaims that joy has taken its departure, till the returning beams of light dissipate the darkness and restore the day.

But melancholy is not always to be found as we have just described it. In some persons, it remains deeply fixed and rooted, which nothing can chase, and which nothing can remove. It eats its cankerous way into the very heart, overshadows every Thought and feeling with its sombrous hues, & quenches too often every ray of intelligence, every flash of genius,

and every burst of genuine feeling.

The causes of melancholy may be considered as almost insentable to human knowledge. In some men it is undoubtedly constitutional; & only requires the aid of circumstances to cause its manifestation. But, whether constitutional or not, a thousand things conspire to produce its appearance. The excess of sorrow, fear, disappointment, casts its shade of melancholy over the suffering frame. The effect of any violent emotion is often to leave the mind in this most pitiable state; to seal up the sources of inward satisfaction, to pour ~~xxx~~ poison over every faculty of the soul, to wither ~~the fibre~~ every fibre that throbs with lofty and aspiring feeling in the human heart. Degraded from her seat of dignified pre-eminence, the mind is lost

in stupid inactivity, or delirious raving; or if it does not thus far descend, it is at least precluded from any great exertion, it is damped by the ~~the~~ fatal influence of melancholy, when surrounded by joy, and gives to every thing connected with it that dark and dreary coloring which sickens the beholder.

We have neither time nor inclination to enter into the various modifications of melancholy. But we would suggest, that in many cases it can be avoided. Minds of a morbid and sickly sensibility are very prone to fall into it, and they should therefore guard against its most distant approach. But unhappily, too many encourage its advances, instead of

repelling its attacks. There is, strange as it may seem to those who have only witnessed without experiencing its effects, a species of gloomy pleasure resulting from melancholy in its first stages. The delicious poison is fed upon, till it paralyses every nerve, and palsies every effort.

There is ~~also a~~ kind of affectation prevalent among a certain class of men, which takes this melancholy for its model of imitation. Filled with that ridiculous set of feelings, commonly termed romantic, these persons endeavor to acquire that appearance of dejection and gloom which they think will add more effect to their expression. They affect the solemn shade, and the dim twilight; the

overarching grove, and the lonely cemetery. It matters not to what ~~class of~~ rank or employment or sex the person belongs. The romantic girl indulges her fancied melancholy beneath the clouded moon; pretends to listen with delight to the faint and fitful breathings of some distant musical instrument, borne along the breezes of the night; or sits lost in pensive contemplation, abstracted from the world, and dejected — for no cause whatever. The poetaster is still more absurd in his conduct. He cannot hear the murmur of a rill, but he loses at once the smile of joy; he cannot hear the wind whistle around a deserted mansion, but his pretended melancholy comes to shadow his countenance. He

not be more particular. But we would by no means be understood to say that these are always symptoms of affectation. We would not cast contempt upon those who are indeed alive to all their gloomy and solemnizing influence; but we would merely remark, that where it is all assumed, the mind of the person who acts in such a manner, must be little, weak, & contemptible.

With regard to melancholy itself, we have said really but little. But our readers will excuse if we refrain from lifting up the veil that conceals the darkness of the mind, and the depravation of the intellectual faculties. It is mournful to see

it in any degree whatever; but the persons who effects it, only deserve to be reduced from their state of fancied importance, & sent again to school to improve their childish capacities, their misguided notions, and their contracted views.

QE.